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THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF CALVINISM

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THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE
OF
CALVINISM

BY

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WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING COMPANY
234 Pearl Street
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Grand Rapids, Michigan

Foreword

The nucleus of what is contained in this book was originally presented by the author in lecture form to the combined Faculties of Calvin College and Seminary. The treatise has been amplified and published in the hope that it may be of some benefit to a wider circle. Ministers, teachers, and intelligent laymen may find it an aid to a better understanding and appreciation of Calvinism.

H. HENRY MEETER.

Grand Rapids, Michigan,
November 7, 1930.

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I.

The Calvinistic World- and Life-View

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John Calvin was not the founder of Calvinism. This system of thought may, with a certain measure of propriety, be named after Calvin, for he was the greatest scientific exponent of it in the sixteenth century, or in fact of any century. To the organizing and systematizing talent of this notable man the system no doubt owes very much. John Calvin will always occupy a high, in fact a determinative, place in Calvinism. But it would be inexact to say that he is the founder of it. The Reformed churches have always looked upon him rather as the chief exponent than as the creator of their doctrinal system. [1]

The deepest thought, the organizing and controlling principle, of Calvinism was sensed long before Calvin's day. It did not originate in the sixteenth century. It had already been grasped by Saint Augustine (354-430). Even long before the day of Saint Augustine it was the controlling thought of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans. And even centuries before Paul, when Isaiah in his great vision saw Jehovah seated upon His throne, clothed with celestial majesty, and was impressed with the consciousness of his own lowliness before the presence of the majestic God, or when he declared: "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite," then he voiced the thought which is basic to Calvinism. It imbued even the very patriarchs, as they walked humbly before the exalted, holy God. Calvinism is as old as the hills. Wherever there were men of God who grasped this thought which controlled Calvin and dominated his system, and wherever men allowed this thought, as did Calvin, to govern their thinking and acting, there in the deepest sense of the term you have a Calvinist. [2]

Not only can the spirit of Calvinism be traced far back into history, but ever since Calvin's day, Calvinism as a system of thought has covered a wide range of territory. It was found in Geneva where Calvin held sway. From there it spread to the other Protestant cantons of Switzerland among the followers of Zwingli. It flourished in France, the birthplace of Calvin, in the party of the Bourbons and Chatillons, later among the Huguenots, and later still among the Camisards. It entered England in the days of Cranmer and Edward VI, counting its adherents in great numbers not alone in the state church, but as well among nonconformists. Calvinism won Holland over to its standard. It is true it has never been the faith of the majority of the inhabitants there, nevertheless down to the present day it has exerted the dominant influence in the lowlands. In fact the genius of the Hollander today cannot well be understood without a knowledge of Calvinism. Scotland is a land known confessionally as a Calvinistic country. It vies with Holland for first honors as a leader of Calvinism in history. A large part of the nobility of Poland at one time adopted Calvin's views. Hungary has long had a large contingent of Calvinists.

To America Calvinism came in the Mayflower, and was the religious view of Pilgrim and Puritan, of the Scotch-Irish of the central states, and in a measure of the Dutch of New York and New Jersey. The Episcopalians had a Calvinistic confession in their Thirty-nine Articles. If we note the lands which Calvinism has entered, and the variety of peoples it has influenced, it can be said that Calvinism has become a worldwide system of thought.

The question how many Calvinists the world numbers today is one replete with interest, but difficult to determine. The answer which we give to it will depend upon the elasticity with which we employ the term. For there are Calvinists and Calvinists. Not all are unhyphenated Calvinists. There are today Christians of the Calvinistic branch of the Reformation which represent the more consistent type and still pride themselves upon their Calvinistic heritage. These, however, today form a distinct minority. But there are others, a far greater number, who display a Calvinism of a mixed type, some of whom would scarcely consider it an honor to be called Calvinists. It remains nevertheless true that even these lesser types reveal the moulding influence of historic Calvinism, and should, if anywhere, be classified with that branch of Protestantism.

Dr. A. Kuyper has observed that in forming our estimate of the number of Calvinists, we should act in the same manner as we do with the term "Christian." We do not count as Christians only those purer types which we find in the Protestant lands of western Christendom and in the Roman and Greek Catholic churches, but we include as well those of the Coptic churches and other Christian sects of the orient, with whom often the very traces of Christianity are scarcely recognizable. As long as they are not Jews or Mohammedans or pagans, but in some faint measure display the characteristics of Christianity, we still call them Christians. [3] If the term "Calvinist" be employed in the same loose sense, as denoting all who display something of the mould peculiar to Calvinism in distinction from the Lutheran or Roman Catholic and other types of the Christian faith, then the number of Calvinists today the world over is exceedingly large. Their number has been estimated to be a hundred and twenty million, or approximately twice the number of Lutherans, which has been reckoned at fifty-six million. In the United States alone, according to the calculation of the statistician H. K. Carroll, the number of Calvinists is reckoned to be no less than sixty-five million. [4]

The title which this movement should bear has been a matter of dispute. Some have proposed, instead of "Calvinism" the name "Reformed", or just simply "Christianity." In favor of the term "Christianity" is the fact that it aims to be just that, no more, no less. From the time of Calvin down it aimed to give expression to purely Christian ideals. It sought to develop a full-orbed Christianity. Calvinism rides no hobbies, does not seek to exalt one truth to the neglect of others. Historically it is not sectarian. It was averse to the spirit of sectarianism. From the very beginning it sought affiliation with Christians wherever possible on the basis of sound biblical principles. Calvin's own attempts to unite with the other Protestant cantons of Switzerland, with the Zwinglians, and no less his persistent attempts at unity with the Lutherans, are vivid examples. But against the name "Christian" the objection may very properly be raised that it would be presumptious towards others of the Christian faith who differ from the Calvinists to speak of the view of the Calvinists as *the* Christian world- and life-view. No one would know just which views among all those advanced by Christians, were meant. Historically it has never succeeded in winning that title for itself. Besides, it may be good Roman Catholic practice to claim the title "Christian" for one's own views alone; it is not Reformed.

The choice lies rather between the terms "Reformed" and "Calvinist". Against the use of the latter term the historical argument has been advanced that the name was not selected by the Calvinists themselves, but by their opponents, the Roman Catholics and the Lutherans. These intended it as a title of opprobrium, to suggest that the adherents of this view were deviating from the truth to follow the teachings of one man, Calvin. While the adherents of this view themselves always contended that they were simply following the very truth of Christianity, and that their views neither originated with Calvin nor were the views of just one man, however great an exponent of them he may have been. However, the fact that the name was first applied to them by opponents to stigmatize them holds true not alone of the name "Calvinist", but equally of the name "Christian", and of the name "Lutheran". The present title of honor which we bear as "Christians" was first employed by the enemies of Christianity as a term of reproach, as the Antioch episode teaches. Also the followers of Luther were dubbed "Lutherans" contrary to their own desires, while they preferred at the first to speak of themselves as "evangelicals".[5] Later they did adopt the name "Lutheran" in application to their churches, which the Calvinists, with the exception of a few minor groups, as the Calvinistic Methodists of Wales, never did with the name "Calvinist". These preferred to speak of their churches as "Reformed" or as "Presbyterian", not as "Calvinist". In view of this it would hardly seem fair to the adherents of Calvinism to insist on a name which they themselves have never adopted for their churches.

When, however, we employ the term in its broadest sense, as indicative not of an ecclesiastical group, but of a world- and life-view, we note that throughout history the term has been so used and adopted by Calvinists as well as by others, and has become all but universal usage. However much objection we may register against the propriety of the name, the plain fact is that it has become historically established as the one to designate these very views. Unwillingly or willingly we shall have to submit to the rule that words receive their validity by usage, and we may as well consider the term our badge of honor. All avoidance of the name "Calvinist" would only tend to create confusion, and might even lay us open to the charge that the views we advocate were something different than historic Calvinism.

When we speak of Calvinism as "a world- and life-view" we have in mind certain definite implications. It implies first of all that Calvinism is a logical system, an organic whole, and not a mere aggregate of opinions.

It is not necessarily the case that the ideas of a group are or can be constructed into a logical system. The case of Wesleyanism at the time of John and Charles Wesley may serve as example. Or even of the Roman Catholics before the days of their great systematizer, Thomas Aquinas (1227-1264), or officially before the Council of Trent (1545-1564). Before that time the views of the Roman Catholic church were scattered amongst various church councils, papal decrees, and writings of church fathers, and could not be said to form a unity or to have been systematized into one whole.

The statement further implies that the

system is not a narrowly religious one, having soteriological significance only, but one which relates to the whole of life in all of its departments, political, social, educational and scientific, no less than the religious or soteriological sphere.

Even upon an a priori view of the matter we would expect these implications concerning Calvinism to be true. For Calvinism bears the distinction among religious groups of being highly intellectual. Calvinism is known for its dialectics. The Calvinists are recognized as the logicians par excellence amongst theologians. Oliver Wendell Holmes even went so far as to satirize this aspect of Calvinism in his burlesque: "The Deacon's Masterpiece." The old one-hoss shay, which was so well constructed that every nut and bolt and bar and spoke was of equal strength and collapsed all at once before the meeting house, was to him the story of Calvinism. As a masterpiece of logic it had continued for ages, but was supposed to have collapsed completely when transcendentalism gained the ascendancy in New England. If intellectualism is so marked a characteristic of the Calvinist, we should be very much disappointed did the system not excel in this particular and be well systematized. Further, we know of Calvin himself how his name has gone down in history as the organizer and systematizer of Protestantism. Melancthon called him the Aristotle of the Reformation. It would be entirely natural to expect that the system of which he is the chief exponent would bear the earmarks of a system well organized. Another fact which would lead us prior to any investigation to expect that Calvinism is a unified world-view, lies in the tremendous God-consciousness of the Calvinist. Above all his fellow-Christians the Calvinist is impressed with the fact that he must always live "coram deo", in the presence of God, whom he sees everywhere. Someone has remarked: "Just as the Methodist places in the foreground the idea of the salvation of sinners, the Baptist, the mystery of regeneration, the Lutheran, justification by faith, the Moravian, the wounds of Christ, the Greek Catholic, the mysticism of the Holy Spirit, and the Romanist, the catholicity of the church, so the Calvinist is always placing in the foreground the thought of God." [6] Calvin himself led off in this direction. "His seal symbolized the man and mirrored his life, — a hand stretched out as to One Invisible, offering a bleeding heart, with the motto, "I give Thee all; I keep nothing back for myself." [7] Calvin has often been spoken of as a God-intoxicated man. When the thought of God was such a controlling factor in the life of the

Calvinist, it would not surprise us were we upon investigation to discover that one thought lay at the bottom of Calvinistic thinking and that that thought would be the one of God; in other words, that the God-concept would be fundamental to his whole outlook upon the world, and be the controlling principle of the system.

II.

The Fundamental Principle

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What now has history to tell us of the fundamental principle of Calvinism? In making our inquiry into the fundamental principle we are not treading on virgin soil. The history of the inquiry dates back to the second or third decade of the former century.

Schleiermacher is perhaps the one who has given the first incentive for this investigation in his *Glaubenslehre* of the year 1821-1822. But Max Goebel is the first investigator who in a special study has focussed the attention of scholars upon this question in the year 1837 by the publication of his work: *Die religiose Eigenthumlichkeit der lutherischen und reformierten Kirchen.* A long line of famous men, celebrities both of the Lutheran and Reformed circles of Germany and elsewhere, has since given special attention to this problem. [8]

The investigation has not resulted in complete unanimity. A consensus of opinion has not been reached. Some, as e.g. J. H. Scholten, P. D. Fabius, A. Kuyper and B. B. Warfield, affirm that the fundamental principle is the sovereignty of God. Others, as Alex. Schweitzer, following Schleiermacher, claim it lies in the feeling of absolute dependance upon God alone. Still others, as H. Kampschulte and J. Bohatec, in the idea of predestination. Others, as G. Frank, in the eternal and immutable decree of God, or as Heppe, in a theocentric creation- and redemption-idea. Some even hold that there is not one but two fundamental ideas, as A. Lang, who asserts that the idea of predestination and the idea of justification by faith are the two formative principles of Calvinism. Some maintain that we must speak of a formal and of a material principle, as Schweitzer and Scholten, while others as Hastie, A. Ritschl, and Kahnis, question the propriety of such a division, especially when referring to the Calvinists before the nineteenth century. Others again question whether we should speak of a fundamental principle at all, as e.g. H. Bauke.

There are very definite reasons why unanimity amongst investigators has not resulted from their search for the fundamental principle. H. Bauke has called attention to the fact that investigators in the conclusions which they have reached, can be grouped according to two or three principles of classification. [9] They can first of all be classified according to their confessional standpoint. There is a clear line of demarcation between the conclusions to which Reformed and those to which Lutheran investigators on the whole have come. In former days the respective leaders for these groups were Alex. Schweitzer for the Reformed and F. C. Baur for the Lutherans, while the Reformed Schneckenburger took a mediating position. Of late the investigators have followed the leadership of A. Ritschl for the Lutheran and A. Kuyper and E. F. K. Müller of Erlangen for the Reformed. Superimposed upon this confessional division Bauke finds another clearly distinguishable; namely, a racial one between the philosophically minded Germans and the more practically minded French. Along with the latter he groups the Hollanders, the English and the Americans as having temperamentally more in common with the French. Thus to cite but one example, the Reformed men of German extraction, as A. Lang, M. Scheibe, and

J. Bohatec, because of their philosophic bent of mind, arrive at somewhat different conclusions than the Frenchman, E. Doumergue. Bauke discovers still a third group, which is restricted to the German-Lutheran territory. Investigators here are divided on the issue, whether we have in Calvinism a specific type of thought distinct from Lutheranism, or whether Calvinism is just a modified Lutheranism, and whether Calvin was an independent thinker or merely a satellite, an "epigone" of Luther. The latter view has been staunchly defended by A. Ritschl and F. Loofs, while W. Dilthey and E. Troeltsch lean somewhat to the opposite view and find more of independence in Calvin, adopting several of the conclusions of the Reformed, following Schleiermacher.

It is questionable in how far the second classification of Bauke is correct. As far as it concerns America, the classification hardly holds. For many of the views which are aired in this country in scientific circles, reveal clearly the brand "made in Germany", and either follow the opinions of E. Troeltsch or of A. Ritschl. But the Reformed estimate of Calvinism is not prominent.

There is still another factor which to the mind of Bauke has beclouded the investigation and has made unanimity impossible. It is what he styles the monistic systematizing tendency which arose since the days of the Aufklärung (1740), which had its theological completion, according to him, in Schleiermacher, and its philosophical in Fichte-Schelling-Hegel. This tendency has greatly influenced investigators, as the dependance of A. Schweitzer upon Schleiermacher and of Baur upon Hegel proves. The attempt since the days of the Aufklärung has namely been to make of Calvin a speculative theologian, just as Schleiermacher himself was, and to find in his system philosophic principles by which he and his associates were supposed to have been governed. While the fact is, says Bauke, that before the Aufklärung it was not the philosophic interest but rather the theologico-polemic interest which was paramount. Calvin least of all was a speculative theologian, but an intensely biblical one. With him the question never is: "What does philosophy say?" but always: "What does divine revelation say?" Calvin did not hesitate to incorporate in his system, notably in the matter of predestination, what apparently would seem to be incoherent elements, "opposita," if only the Bible gave ground for so doing. Hence elements are found in Calvinism which it would be difficult to include in a thoroughly monistic scheme.

Another cause for the difference of opinion deserves mention. Investigators have busied themselves all too frequently in determining the points of difference by which

Calvinism is to be distinguished from other theological tendencies, notably from its sister-system, the Lutheran, and from the Arminian, as explained in the five so-called points of Calvinism drawn up at the Synod of Dordt. B. B. Warfield has rightly called attention to this. [10] He remarks that of no system the sum of its differences with other systems can ever be called the fundamental principle of that system. It is not to be wondered at that amid all such considerations investigators have not arrived at unanimous views.

In our search for the fundamental principle it seems quite proper to begin with the consideration of the question, whether we can with propriety even speak of a fundamental principle. Some have maintained that we cannot properly so speak. And not all for the same reasons. A very common argument advanced in Lutheran circles amounts to this, that Calvinism is not a distinctive movement in the history of Protestantism at all, and has not a specific principle of its own, but is just modified Lutheranism, and that Calvin was not an originator, but simply a spiritual descendant, an "epigone" of Luther. W. Hastie has stated the matter thus: "While the Lutheran church has a distinct material principle in its supreme doctrine of justification by faith alone, the Reformed church, it has been alleged, is not characterized by any other similar fundamental principle, and the particular divergences of the Reformed from the Lutheran system are only accidental variations that have arisen from the different degrees in which the formal scriptural principle has been held and applied". [11]

Over against this view we believe the statement of Dr. Hastie to be correct: "This view is evidently superficial, and inadequate to explain the Reformed system." Even Luther himself, as this author points out, held obstinately to the existence of "another spirit" in Zwingli and his associates, and he adds, "The whole cast of the Reformed Theology — its logical severity, organic connection, and scientific unity, — points even more clearly to the presence and working of a special inner principle of its own." [12]

Others, like Bauke, have objected to the mention of a fundamental principle on a different ground. They base their objections on such facts as the apparently contradictory elements, or "opposita," which are found in the Calvinistic system. These would then indicate that there is not a dynamic unity present but merely a formal-rational unity. The separate elements of the Calvinistic system could then not have been born of a single fundamental principle, but have been compressed into a formal unity by the formal rationalizing tendency of Calvin and Calvinists. To this a second argument is added. It is not denied that certain of the elements of the Calvinistic system are more strongly accentuated than others, as in any system. But the moment any of these is elevated to the position of fundamental principle, violence is thereby done to other elements and a false portrait is given of Calvinism. [13]

Neither of these objections seems to me to be very weighty. The one that finds in Calvinism the presence of logically apparently contradictory elements does not prove that Calvinism has not one fundamental principle. It is a fact that the Bible — the sourcebook for Calvinism — does contain what to the human mind do seem logically incoherent elements, ideas difficult to harmonize. Think, to cite but a single instance, of the absolute sovereignty of God and man's responsibility. Calvin and most Calvinists did not shrink from incorporating these seemingly incoherent elements into their system. The very existence of these "opposites" in Calvin's writings have made some historians fasten in their readings of Calvin upon one line and others upon another. Thus, to cite a few illustrations, some have traced the intellectual strain in Calvin and have made of him an ultra-intellectualist, others an ultra-mysticist, some have called him a blind reactionary, others a frightful revolutionary, some have spoken of him as a natural product of Catholicism, others have made him a precursor of modernism, at one time he is spoken of as an extreme ascetic, at another as an eater and drinker. In reality he was neither the one nor the other. [14] These opposites are in Calvin and Calvinism. In fact they in a measure are the secret of Calvinism's success and of its balance. B. Wielinga has rightly said: "In its world- and life-view Calvinism seeks the maintenance of the equilibrium between the complementary opposites: Mystery and revelation, transcendance and immanence, rationality and mysticism, spirit and matter, the heavenly and the earthly, dependance and responsibility, separation from the world and culture." "In the adherence to these contra-polar relationships lay the guarantee of the progress and the fruitfulness of Calvinism in every sphere of life, also in the sphere of culture." [15] But after all has been said about the "opposites" which appear in the Calvinistic system, do not forget that it was not in violation of a fundamental principle that these "complementary opposites," as Dr. Wielinga calls them, were maintained, but precisely as a result of the fundamental principle. It was just because of their obedience to their fundamental principle to have God be Sovereign in the whole of their thinking, in everything, even then when their logic failed to give an adequate account of things, that the Calvinists were prepared, nay, were compelled, to incorporate these apparently logical opposites into their system.

The second argument advanced, that by the elevation of one of the Calvinistic doctrines to the position of fundamental principle, injustice is done to other principles and to the system as a whole, is simply not a fact.

What injustice is done — to cite but one example — to the idea of predestination, when the sovereignty of God is construed as the fundamental principle of the system? In fact it would seem historically correct to assert that it was just because Calvin and Calvinists held so ardently to the principle that God as Sovereign was the ultimate Source of their thinking and the Commander of their lives, that they were led thereby to hold to the principle of absolute predestination, in the broad, all-embracing sense in which they understood this doctrine.

Despite the objections which have been raised, therefor, we believe we may speak of a fundamental principle. Not, however, in this sense that the Reformed Fathers as speculative theologians started out with a definite fundamental principle, and from it as a starting point consciously, logically developed their system with its variety of implications. Religious movements in the history of the Christian church have not so originated. Such is not true of Augustinianism. Nor of Lutheranism. And it is not true of Calvinism. You may be able so to reduce the speculative theology of Schleiermacher or even of Origen to fundamental principles. But not so Calvinism.

It was not born in the studyroom of a speculative philosophic theologian, not even in Calvin's study, but in the hearts of the men of God of that day. These were so imbued with the spirit of that one principle, and so controlled by it, ofttimes without being able themselves to render a clear logical account of it, that they came to hold just the views which they did.

Granting this much, I believe we should speak of a fundamental principle. The question may arise: Should we speak of a formal and a material principle? In a sense this question may be regarded as being beyond the scope of the present inquiry. For a very obvious reason. By the formal principle is meant, says Hastie, [16] "the rule or standard of their faith or of the authoritative scriptural source of our knowledge of Christian doctrine; by the material principle is meant the universal doctrine or fundamental thesis which lies at the basis of the dogmatic formulation of the system." This division of principles, adopted by Schweitzer, Scholten and other more recent scholars as the same writer maintains, [17] "does not go further back as a logical method than the nineteenth century, having been brought into vogue by Tweston, the successor of Schleiermacher at Berlin. And as an examination of any of the systematic discussions shows, only by a somewhat forced construction can the contents of the theological system be arranged under this division." It is, I believe, true of Calvinism that the formal principle, if we may so speak, as well as the subject matter, is under control of the urprincip, the fundamental guiding principle. We need not enter into the question further here.

This urprincip is not to be found in any of the peculiar characteristics, the idiosynchrasies of its founders. It is not, for example, to be found in the Roman lineage of Calvin and in line with it the ability to order and arrange clearly great masses of material and convert ideas he gained into laws and ordinances for practical life, a trait characteristic of the French type of mind. Nor in the training of Calvin, either in his humanistic training or in his schooling as a lawyer. Nor in the democratic spirit of the first Calvinistic leaders, nor in the republican spirit of the Swiss cantons, nor in the free scope given to reason in its attitude to Scripture. For although it is quite true that much light is at times shed upon some phase of Calvin's life and upon Calvinism through a study of the idiosyncrasies of the leaders of Calvinism, or their training, etc., nevertheless it is true what R. Seeberg remarks,[18] that this humanistically trained Frenchman was above all an evangelical Christian and his whole worldview in the end was determined by his evangelical spirit. Dr. Hastie calls such suggestions as those cited above, "conjectures of ingenious thinkers inadequately acquainted with the conditions of the problem, rather than scientific conclusions derived from a full and exhaustive examination of the available material". [19]

The fundamental principle, if anywhere, lies precisely in the field of the doctrines of the Calvinists, and these doctrines conceived not as abstractions but as living principles, which motivated and dominated the whole of their life. We can even state it more specifically. It lies in the field of the doctrine of God. It is not an anthropological, or a soteriological, or an ecclesiological, but decidedly a theological principle, which dominates Calvinism. A cursory glance at the results to which investigators of this problem have come, will convince one of this. Whether investigators find the principle to be the sovereignty of God, or the glory of God, or the eternal and immutable decree of God, or specifically God's decree of predestination, or the divine creation- and redemption-idea, or the absolute dependence upon God, in each case the God-concept is considered fundamental to the Calvinist thinking. Even such critics, as H. Bauke, who are not prepared to speak of a fundamental principle, admit the primary importance of this theological idea in the Calvinistic system. He remarks: [20] "That we have before us in this (i.e. the doctrine of God) a weighty fundamental element, about this there can be no doubt, and on this point all investigators are agreed." Karl Holl, Professor of church history of the Königliche Friedrich Wilhelms Universitat at Berlin, in his address on John Calvin in 1909, [21] remarks: "The significance of Calvin's theological activity rests on the energy with which he has placed the idea of God in the centre. Every separate problem with Calvin culminates in the idea of God." In fact the theological viewpoint is characteristic of the entire Calvinistic religion for the first 150 years, according to W. Dilthey.[22]

To cite but one more authority, N. W. E. Rauenhoff remarks[23]: "Whether we describe the principle of the Reformed as 'the principle of absolute dependence upon God,' or as 'the idea of the absolute causality of God,' or as 'the confession of God's absolute sovereignty in the natural and moral realms', the result for the distinctive direction of the Calvinistic system remains principally the same. At all times the Reformed in their views proceed from the objective, from God, and in accordance with it arrange their system."

A glance at the Calvinistic confessions leads us to the same conclusion. As A. Eekhof has noted,[24] whether you consult the Catechism of Geneva of 1545 or the

Scottish Confession of Faith of 1560 or the Catechism of Embden of 1554 or the Hungarian Catechism of 1562, or the theses of Zwingli defended in 1523, they all agree with the first question and answer of the Shorter Westminster Catechism of 1647: "What is the chief end of man?" Answer: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." The same dominant sentiment is expressed in Calvin's second catechism of 1541, where Calvin sums up his philosophy of life as follows: "What is the principal end of human life? To know God. Why do you say that? Because He has created us and put us into the world to be glorified in us, and it is right that we should devote our life to His glory since He is the commencement of it." The same thought is reflected clearly in the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563, where it is stated that man was created "that he might rightly know

God his Creator, heartily love Him, and live with Him in eternal happiness to glorify and praise Him."

If we examine the works of Calvin we shall meet the same great truth that God is the masterthought of his world- and life-view. No one can study the four parts into which the Institutes are divided: The doctrine of God, of Man, of Redemption, of the Church, but he must be impressed with the fact, that in them all the controlling thought is God. The very opening words of the Institutes [25] are significant here: "True and substantial wisdom principally consists of two parts, the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of ourselves. But, while these two branches of knowledge are so intimately connected, which of them precedes and produces the other, is not easy to discover. For in the first place no man can take a survey of himself but he must immediately turn to the contemplation of God, in Whom he 'lives and moves,' since it is evident that the talents which we possess are not from ourselves, and that our very existence is nothing but a subsistence in God alone." Examination of other works of Calvin manifest this same dominance of God as Calvin's masterthought. Whether you examine his commentaries, or his sermons, or his treatises, everywhere Calvin presses into the foreground the controlling thought of God. It made men say of him that Calvin was a "God-intoxicated man". Just as we speak of the apostle who emphasized the deity of Jesus as Saint John the divine, so we might with great propriety speak of Calvin the divine. And what is true of Calvin is likewise true of Calvinism, wherever it has appeared in its unadulterated form. Speaking of the wellknown trilogy which he finds in Calvinism; namely of perfect theism, perfect religion, and perfect evangelicalism, B. B. Warfield says: "From these things shine out upon us the formative principle of Calvinism. The Calvinist is the man who sees God behind all phenomena and in all that occurs recognizes the hand of God, working out His will; who makes the attitude of the soul to God in prayer its permanent attitude in all its life-activities; and who casts himself on the grace of God alone, excluding every trace of dependence on self from the whole work of his salvation." [26]

Calvinism, in making the God-concept the formative principle, is to be distinguished from other systems of the Christian religion. It is to be distinguished from the Roman Catholic religion in which the underlying principle is an ecclesiological one, that of the all-saving church. Or from its sisterchurch with which it has often been compared, the Lutheran. The difference does not lie in this that the Lutheran does not recognize the sovereignty of God, or the fact that all should live to the glory of God. These facts the Lutheran believes as well as the Calvinist. Nor does the Calvinist question at all the fact of justification by faith alone, which is the recognized fundamental principle of Lutheranism. But the difference lies precisely in this. As Dr. Warfield expresses it, [27] "Lutheranism, sprung from the throes of a guilt-burdened soul seeking peace with God, finds this peace in faith, and stops right there. . . . (It) will know nothing beyond the peace of the justified soul. Calvinism asks with the same eagerness as Lutheranism the great question: 'What shall I do to be saved?' and answers it precisely as Lutheranism answers it. But it cannot stop there. The deeper question presses upon it, 'Whence this faith by which I am justified?' .... It has zeal no doubt for salvation, but its highest zeal is for the honor of God, and it is this question which quickens its emotions and vitalizes its efforts. It begins, it centers, and it ends with the vision of God in His glory; and it sets itself before all things to render to God his rights in every sphere of life activity." W. Hastie ascribes this difference between the Lutherans and the Reformed to the fact that "while the Lutheran Reformation protested against the Jewish corruptions of the mediaeval church arising from a relapse into a Pelagian righteousness by works, the Reformed church directed its protest against the pagan elements in the mediaeval church occasioned by a relapse into the idolatry of the creature with the consequent obscuration of the glory of God." But whatever the causes for this difference, this at least is a fact, while the Lutheran asks as his primal question: "What in man wins salvation? Not faith but works," the Reformed ask as primal question: "Who saves, the creature or God?" God, not man, objective not subjective, theological not anthropological, is the formative principle of Calvinism. Calvinism has succeeded in reaching an objective principle of religion, while Lutheranism has not.

The Gottesbegriff, the God-concept, is therefor basic to the Calvinistic system.

Our problem becomes far more involved, however, the moment we attempt further definition of this fundamental principle. What in God is fundamental? How is God conceived by the Calvinist? In His majesty, so that the sovereignty of God is considered fundamental? Or God as the absolute causality of all being? Or His infinite decree? Or His decree of predestination? Or the creation- and redemption-idea of God? Or the glory of God?

We cannot speak with as much definiteness here. There is danger by further definition, of limiting the activity of God to a certain sphere, and of not allowing the conception of God to be fundamental to the whole of life, as the Calvinist insists upon.

This is notably true of those who hold that the idea of predestination is the fundamental idea. The popular notion of predestination as determining purely the state of God's rational creatures in eternity, which in non-scientific circles has been held to be the central doctrine of Calvinism ever since the day of the Roman Catholic Kampschulte, [29] must be ruled out at the very outset. It certainly cannot be the fundamental principle. For, to begin with, the

Calvinistic doctrine of predestination differs essentially from the idea of determinism or fatalism which is popularly ascribed to it, as anyone who has made a study of it can know. As Charles Hodge has pointed out,[30] the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination and fatalism agree in only one point: Both assume absolute certainty in the sequence of all events. But they differ in the *ground* of this certainty, the *nature* of the influence by which it is secured, the *ends* contemplated, and the *effects* on the reason and the conscience of men.

Furthermore, predestination cannot be the basic thought, for, as one authority has observed, it would conflict with the essence of Calvinism, to make a fundamental principle of God's idea relative to man's salvation. [31] It is not man, nor anything that may or may not happen to man, that is fundamental to the Calvinist's thinking, but God. The divine Being itself, His greatness, His majesty stands in the foreground here.

Since the day of A. Ritschl, amongst Lutherans and Reformed, it is quite generally conceded that the idea of predestination is not the fundamental principle. As Bauke states: "The doctrine of predestination, as all Lutheran and Reformed investigators since the day of A. Ritschl have agreed, with the possible exception of Bohatec, is not the central doctrine of Calvinism." [32]

The above objections advanced against the popular notion of predestination, do not hold, however, against the view as held by Bohatec. [33] He does distinguish between it and fatalism. He does view it, not from the human side but from the divine side, as the embodiment of God's will, as God's activity. But even the view as held by Bohatec, cannot be the basic thought of Calvinism. Consider predestination if you will from its divine side, think of it as broadly as you will, as relating not only to the eternal state of men but as inclusive of their experiences in time, even so predestination will always remain an activity of God with regard to conditions only of men, and of men as they exist after the fall. It lets out of consideration and excludes all thought of God's activity with man in the state of righteousness. Furthermore, it limits the thought of God to the moral world and at best would only quite indirectly include God's relationship to the vast world of nature. But the Calvinist sees God as his dominant thought everywhere. It is placing too great a limitation upon the thought of God to speak of the decree of predestination as the fundamental principle. [34]

An examination of the Calvinistic confessions reveals that these give but poor support to the view that this doctrine is the fundamental principle of the Calvinist. Especially is this true of the earlier confessions, those drafted under the influence of John Calvin. In his first catechism, the one of 1537, predestination is referred to in a paragraph as a fact of observation, while Calvin strongly deprecates prying into the hidden mysteries of it. In the Confession of Faith drafted soon afterwards in the same year, there is no mention of this doctrine. Nor is it more than incidentally referred to in the next Catechism of Calvin, in the year 1541. Of four other confessions attributed to Calvin, three allude to the doctrine in passing, and only in the sense of election; namely, the Confession for the French King in 1557, the Confession for the scholars in Geneva of 1559, and the one to the Emperor and the States of 1562. The confession drawn up for the Synod of Paris mentions it specifically, but again only in the sense of election.

In the creed which must be subscribed to by the teachers and pupils of the Academy at Geneva it does not appear. In the earliest writings of Calvin as on "Christian Philosophy," written for or in conjunction with Nicholas Cop, and in his preface to Olevitan's Bible, it does not receive mention. In the first edition of his "Institutes" it is mentioned, in the soteriological section, and even there given no special prominence. Calvin had Melanchthon's "Loci" translated and published in French, the second edition namely, the one in which Melanchthon withdrew from the pronounced predestinarian views of the first edition. Still, Calvin, knowing all this, did not hesitate to recommend the work as a "brief summary of the things which a Christian ought to know to guide him in the way of salvation." And the case is on record in which Calvin did not refuse to receive an Anabaptist into the church, even though he could not accept this doctrine. It was only after the doctrine of predestination was assailed and opposed that it drew forth a defense from the pen of Calvin. Just the very opposition made Calvin enlarge upon it in his later editions of the Institutes and in his pronouncements upon that theme at the time of his controversy with Pighius. This survey of conditions indicates sufficiently that predestination cannot be called the fundamental principle of Calvinism. [35]

In fact the popular notion that it is the distinctive principle of Calvinism, as if that doctrine sets off Calvinism from the rest of Christendom, is likewise erroneous. As Dr. Warfield states, there is no large body of whole Christendom which does not include it in some form in its confessional statements.

Even in the form of absolute predestination, as Calvinists hold, it was taught by other non-Calvinists before Calvin. All the leaders of the Reformation believed it. Zwingli of course believed it. But Luther also taught absolute predestination as zealously as did Calvin. And it was not Calvin, but Melanchthon, who first among the Reformers gave predestination its formal expression, in his first edition of the "Loci Communes." It was a defense of absolute predestination, though he later fell away to the synergistic position. Bucer also taught it. And before the days of the Reformation Wycliff strenuously asserted it. It was taught by Gottschalk in the ninth century and approved by the Synod of Lyons in 854. And Saint Augustine taught absolute predestination centuries before Calvin. So it can hardly be called even the distinctive doctrine of Calvinism. [36]

But though we cannot, upon the basis of historical evidence, call this doctrine the fundamental, or even the distinctive, principle of Calvinism, nevertheless it is in Calvinism a doctrine of frontrank importance. It is true that it only receives a modest place in the Calvinistic confessions, and for Calvinism in general we may never call it the fundamental principle, the point of departure. It nevertheless is a point of arrival, a necessary hypothesis for the Calvinistic system and for all true Calvinists. And for some later Calvinists in the scholastic age, it did even become the starting point. [37]

It is not difficult to grasp the reason why this doctrine should attain to such eminence in the system. The Calvinist is the man who has caught a vision of God in His majesty, one who sees the controlling and guiding hand of God everywhere, who firmly believes that nothing can so much as move without His will, that "in Him we live and move and have our being." Start out with this postulate, believe in the sovereignty of God with your whole heart, and predestination as an activity of God, whereby He directs the affairs of men and establishes their eternal destiny, is the necessary result. All surrender of man's future destiny into his own hands, or even all synergism between God and man, insofar reduces God to the position of a mere passive Bystander, and deprives Him of His sovereignty. Believe in God as absolute Sovereign, Who originated and governs the world for His own glory, and with the strictest of all logic you must come to the conclusion to which the Calvinist arrives; namely, that of absolute predestination. The doctrine of predestination is the synthesis of the principle of God's sovereignty and the principle of religious development in history and in the moral life of men. Doumergue, who rejects the idea that predestination is the foundation-thought and holds this to be the sovereignty of God, calls predestination the keystone of the system. [38] As indicated above, not without good reason. The sovereignty of God is not realized in its completest sense as long as God's will in the accomplishment of His purposes is still made contingent upon the will of man, but only when above all secondary agencies God as the superior controlling Will directs the accomplishment of his purposes. Our Reformed Fathers have therefore not improperly called it the "cor ecclesiae."

If predestination, despite its importance, therefor, cannot be called the fundamental principle, neither is it exact to speak of this as being "the glory of God." This presentation of the view is a rather common one amongst Reformed, especially in non-scientific circles. "Reformed" has frequently been described as that "system of religion in which God is most highly glorified and man most deeply abased." Now it quite true that the Calvinist of all men is most deeply conscious of his duty to live in every relationship of life to the glory of God. It is quite true that this thought is a controlling one in his life. But this view again appears to suffer, as does the "predestination" view, from too great limitation of the conception of God. It defines the fundamental principle of Calvinism purely in teleological terms. The ultimate purpose of man and of the whole world is, to be sure, to the Calvinist, to promote the glory of God. But the Calvinist does not introduce God only into the purposes for which we and all things consist. God is to him the first and controlling thought in everything, in purposes, origins, mode of existence, everywhere. Other views, as of the "absolute causality of God," or the "theocentric creation- and redemption-idea" suffer from the same difficulty, that of too great limitation of the thought of God.

The view which seems to be most plausible is the one which defines the fundamental principle as the absolute sovereignty of God in the natural and moral spheres. This view has in its favor that it is held by a large numbers of investigators, both Calvinist and otherwise. I shall mention just a few: E. Doumergue, A. Kuyper, H. Bavinck, B. B. Warfield, D. P. D. Fabius, J. H. Scholten, A. Mitchell Hunter, G. Beyerhaus.

This fundamental principle, when so defined, calls for further description to safeguard against possible misunderstanding. The sovereignty of God must not be construed as a mere attribute of God as distinguished from the love of God or His grace or His justice, or any other attribute. It is rather God in the exercise of His sovereign rights in all spheres and in all relationships, as it relates to His love and grace, His justice, His control of human destinies, the control of nature and its laws; it is God in this exercise of His sovereign rights which lies at the bottom of the Calvinist's thinking. As Dr. Warfield has expressed it, the fundamental principle lies in "a profound apprehension of God in His majesty, with the inevitably accompanying poignant realization of the exact nature of the relation sustained to Him by the creature as such, and particularly of the sinful creature," . . . . "The Calvinist is the man who has seen God, and who, having seen God in His glory, is filled on the one hand with a sense of his own unworthiness to stand in God's sight as a creature, and much more as a sinner, and on the other with adoring wonder that nevertheless this God is a God Who receives sinners. He who believes in God without reserve, and is determined that God shall be God to him, in all his thinking, feeling, willing, — in the entire compass of his life-activities, intellectual, moral, spiritual, — throughout all his individual, social, religious relations, — is by the force of the strictest of all logic which presides over the outworking of principles into thought and life, by the very necessity of the case, a Calvinist." [39]

The sovereignty of God, when so understood, cannot conflict with the love of God or with any other attribute, or be contrasted to it, but the love of God is just one of the modes in which this sovereignty of God finds expression. For the sovereignty of God is not by Calvinists considered an attribute of God. Neither Bavinck nor Kuyper nor Hodge nor Shedd nor Gravemeyer, leading Calvinistic theologians, include "sovereignty" under the attributes of God. Charles Hodge expressly states [40]: "Sovereignty is not a property of the divine nature, but a prerogative arising out of the perfections of the Supreme Being." The allegation has been made, in Lutheran circles, by A. Ritschl, that the sovereignty of God is an imperfect principle, and ought to be superceded by the doctrine of the love of God or the divine Fatherhood. [41] But only by a misconstruction of the sovereignty of God and of the love of God can we so contrast them.

Mitchell Hunter has correctly stated this relationship as conceived by the Calvinist when he says of Calvin: "The sovereignty of God dominates Calvin's thought and forms the citadel into which he retreats whenever hard pressed by antagonists, yet he conceives of it as acting through various attributes, or as it were from different centres of His being. He represents the sovereign divine will as operating now as justice, now as mercy or love or wrath, as though any one of these might be isolated from the rest for the time being, and other centres or springs of action in God become quiescent, inactive." He adds: "Did we know all of God, according to Calvin, we should see that there is no inner contradiction at all, and that when God is just, He does not cease to be merciful, or when He is wrathful, He does not cease to be loving." [42] H. Bavinck correlates the sovereignty of God and His love and His justice etc. in substantially the same way when he states: "The root principle of this Calvinism is the confession of God's absolute sovereignty. Not one special attribute of God, for instance His love or justice, His holiness or equity, but God Himself as such in the unity of all His attributes and the perfection of His entire Being is the point of departure for the thinking and acting of the Calvinist." [43]

III.

Supreme Importance of this Fundamental Principle

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The fact that Calvinism has as its fundamental principle the idea of the sovereignty of God, is not a matter of minor importance, differentiating it just a trifle from other religious systems. It is of far reaching consequence for the whole system, giving to Calvinism in the stellar heavens of religious systems the position of a lone star that dwells apart. Other religious systems, particularly Lutheranism, with which it is constantly being compared, have not been able to ascend above a subjective, anthropological-soteriological position, resting in the thought of man's salvation as a sort of final question. Calvinism with its theological standpoint, looking at the world as God's world, originating in Him, and existing for Him, being concerned as with a fundamental question about God's sovereignty, takes a far broader view than the soteriological one of man's salvation. It makes room for a world-government and a religious system which includes all spheres. The salvation of individuals is only a part — be it an important part — of a far larger whole. Nature as well as grace demands the Calvinist's attention. To the Calvinist Christ died not only to save men. He died for God's world. In a very real sense it can be said that He died for science. He died for the restoration of society. He died for the restoration of the political world. He died for the restoration of all things. The whole world in consequence becomes a field in which the Calvinist is interested. In it all he sees God's hand. It all must be made subservient to the sovereign wishes of its

King. Everywhere the Calvinist is conscious of the fact that he is treading on his heavenly Father's soil, in the realm of science and art, in politics, in business, in social life, no less than in the realm of particular grace. Everywhere in all departments of life he is treading on holy ground, and his duty carries him everywhere. And in each of these spheres the principle has set in motion an activity unexcelled, unequalled by any other religious system.

Accordingly it is essential to a clear understanding of the basic thought of Calvinism to keep in mind the exact meaning which is to be attached to the term "fundamental". By it is meant not merely that Calvinism confesses to a series of fundamental truths and of them all the sovereignty of God is the most fundamental. This basic thought of the sovereignty of God is the *formative principle of the system.*

It is the germinal idea, the seed-thought of Calvinism. The system was not first in order, with the fundamental idea its logical conclusion. Just the reverse! The formative principle gave rise to the system. As Herman Bavinck states it: "From this root principle everything that is specifically Reformed may be derived and explained." [44]

It led the Calvinist to hold the very views which he did hold in theology. But it no less accounts for the fact that he framed round this idea as a centre his distinctive views in politics, in social and in educational life. It "produced a specific view of the world and life as a whole; so to speak a philosophy all its own." [45] Because in his innermost soul the Calvinist was imbued with the thought of God and that in all of life he was to live coram deo, he felt compelled to interpret life as a whole in terms of this fundamental principle.

In the sphere of theology this principle, — made all the more emphatic by the thought of the total depravity of man, — threw the whole weight of the matter of salvation upon God alone. God was the one Factor upon Whom all depended for salvation. God originated salvation, the world's Redeemer was God-given, salvation was objectively wrought by God for man and applied by God through man, and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was shoved into the foreground as in no other system. All autosoterism was banished, and man had to rely from start to finish upon the mercies of God. Calvinism is pure supernaturalism and pure evangelicalism in the sphere of religion. The very antithesis of modernism, which in its consistent form is pure naturalism and autosoteric.

Another important sequence of this fundamental principle is the heightened importance attached to the Bible. With all of the Reformers the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures received profound emphasis. But while Luther regards the Bible as God's special revelation for matters of salvation, for Calvinism the Bible becomes less a mere means to assure man of God's forgiving love to sinners, than a book containing a revelation which has as its aim to form a group of men, a church and kingdom of God, which shall promote God's glory. The Bible aims not merely to tell man how to be saved, but when saved to tell how the redeemed man can and must live in all relationships of life to the glory of God. As a result, not all of what the Bible contains is by the Calvinist compressed into the scheme of man's salvation. For example, many of the laws of the Old Testament are not regarded as merely serving the purpose of schoolmaster to drive man out to Christ, but are understood to embody eternal principles according to which redeemed man must live, and the Old Testament takes on independent significance. The Bible is broadened out to include the principles for the whole of life.

The Bible becomes the unconditional positive norm of Christian faith and life.

Another result of this respect of the Calvinist for the sovereignty of God is the fact that he refused to go a step beyond what was written. If we take Calvin as our example, Calvinism was averse to all speculation in determining the knowledge of God. Calvin warned repeatedly against the dangers of speculative theology, of basing our conceptions of God upon our "philosophizing" about God, no matter how attractive these speculations might be. He pointed repeatedly to the warning example of

Zwingli and his speculations. Calvin in his utterances about God always kept his feet on solid ground, the ground of God's Word, and refused to go a step beyond what the Bible taught. He went far in his investigations about God, penetrating into mysteries about which the average man never dreams, but always for his assertions he sought ground in the Word of God, and where this would not lead him, he refused to go. His motto was not: "Nothing contrary to the Word of God," but "Nothing but the Word of God." He preferred to let a mystery remain a mystery rather than to offer a solution for which there was no basis in Scripture. With Calvin it was not philosophy that controlled theology, but conversely, God's Word that controlled Calvinistic philosophy. [46]

It is necessary to keep this principle of strict adherence to the express teaching of the Bible in mind when explaining Calvinism. The characterization given by H. Bauke of Calvin's theology holds true of Calvinism: "The separate elements of Calvin's theology are derived, religious matters. Calvin himself is no speculative philosopher, nor a speculative dogmatician; he has nothing in common either with Fichte or Hegel, or with Biedermann or Lipsius." [47] Dogmaticians have involved themselves again and again in confusion by trying to interpret Calvinism in the light of some previous philosophy. A notable example of this is the attempt to identify the Calvinistic doctrine of the will of God with the Scotistic doctrine of caprice. Many have been in error in assuming because both Calvin and Duns Scotus have found in the will of God the ultimate norm of the good, that therefor Calvin was a Scotist on this point. But as Ernst Troeltsch has pointed out, [48] the resemblance is one of mere analogy, not of genetic relationship. Such diverse critics as J. Bohatec, H. Bauke, M. Hunter and Ernst Troeltsch all acclaim with one accord that the Calvinistic doctrine of the freedom of the will and the Scotistic doctrine of caprice are in no wise identical. [49]

Calvinism, with this fundamental principle of God's sovereignty, and in consequence of God's special revelation in Scripture as a basis, has built up a philosophical system which may be denominated the purest expression of Theism. It holds to a God Who is the eternal, personal, spiritual, absolute Being, the almighty and sovereign God, the Creator and Governor of the Universe, and round this thought it has conceived of the world as an unfolding of His plan, and interprets the universe from the standpoint of God's purpose. To it, all that happens in the physical and moral realms is the unfolding of the eternal purpose of God. In His activity God is not limited either by the world of nature or by the human will, as is the case in various other theistic beliefs, nor is God merged in the world process as in pantheism, but He is the almighty Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the universe, Whose purpose and power are not limited. While other theistic beliefs, as the Lutheran and Arminian, have compromised the relation of God to His world, Calvinism has maintained in contrast what may be termed a purely theistic conception of the universe. [50]

Another result — one of primal importance — which follows from making the sovereignty of God basic to the system, is an enormous activity in the field of ethics. Today many are following in the line of the subjectivism of Fichte or of the pantheism of Hegel and raising the motto: "Develop the god that is in you", "listen to the voice of the higher self", which voice is then made to be identical with the voice of God. It is a philosophy which is highly detrimental to morality and leads to all sorts of subjectivism and individualism. Calvinism, too, wishes to listen to the voice of God. In fact, ethically that is a very fundamental position with Calvinism. But the God which it honors is not a pantheistic one which in last analysis is identical with oneself, but a supernatural God. Calvinism has its categorical imperative, its "Du sollst," but it is the voice of an objective God, Who in His objective revelation incorporated in His Word, has laid down His law for man. The result is the strictest adherence of the Calvinist to a norm that is outside of and above him. Through placing man before an objective norm of a supernatural Sovereign, Calvinism "has effected the moralization of all of life through religion." [51]

In the sphere of politics the sovereignty of God has proved to be a potent principle. Wherever Calvinism gained the ascendancy, this principle was ardently maintained and applied to the affairs of government. God was adjudged the supreme Ruler to Whom both government and governed must render unswerving obedience. The law of God was reckoned as the regulative norm. This should not be interpreted to mean that Calvinism ever has intended to reintroduce the Mosaic theocracy into the modern world. As Calvin repeatedly asserted, the Mosaic theocracy is inapplicable to present day conditions, several of its laws having only temporary significance. But the Bible — both the Old Testament and the New — to the Calvinist's mind, did contain the basic norms, the eternal principles which never change, and are normative for every age and for every government. No one type of government was thought to be the God-ordained one for today, even though Calvinism did display a predilection for the republican type. But whatever the system of government, be it monarchy or democracy or any other form, in each case the ruler (or rulers) was to act as God's representative, and to administer the affairs of government in accordance with God's law. The fundamental principle supplied at the same time the very highest incentive for the preservation of law and order among the citizens. Subjects were for God's sake to render obedience to the higher powers, whichever these might be. Hence Calvinism made for highly stabilized governments.

On the other hand this very principle of the sovereignty of God operated as a mighty defense of the liberties of the subject citizens against tyrannical rulers. Whenever sovereigns ignored the will of God, trampled upon the rights of the governed and became tyrannical, it became the privilege and the duty of the subjects, in view of the higher responsibility to the supreme Sovereign, God, to refuse obedience and even, if necessary, to depose the tyrant, through the lesser authorities appointed by God for the defense of the rights of the governed.[52]

The fundamental principle likewise implies for social life that it be ordered along God-ordained lines. The Calvinist can hear of no divorce between religion and social life, as if religion only related to a man's private life with God, while the social relationships of man to man were exempt from it. Society in all its organized as well as unorganized forms must render obedience to God and is amenable to His law. Wherever Calvinism has spread, there the social order has been Christianized to a degree not found elsewhere. The whole of social life is reckoned to belong to God. The Calvinist's duty leads him not away from society to live the life of an ascetic, but right into the maelstrom of social life, there to promote the interests of society's God. A number of social virtues, such as obedience to parents and other home virtues, fidelity to one's task, fraternity, loyalty, frugality, honesty, are stressed and receive religious sanction as so many parts of man's reasonable service to God. Each person has the calling to develop his distinctive God-given talents to the highest degree possible. Calvinism does not make for passive types of individuals which loose themselves in mystic contemplation of God. With its enormous emphasis upon the will, upon duty, upon calling, it tends to produce highly developed personalities. But these personalities may not live for selfish ends. All their advantages, their privileges, become in turn so many responsibilities, wherewith they are to serve society and society's God. [53]

A marked influence has through the application of this principle been exerted upon various spheres of society, of which the influence which Calvinism has had upon economic life may serve as an illustration. The sphere of industry and commerce are reckoned to belong to God as does everything else, and the Calvinist considers it his duty to develop it to the utmost — for his God. The Calvinist does not shy at business as something profane. Rather his business is his "calling" from God. It is a part of his religion. Religiously he must practice such business virtues as thrift, economy, frugality, honesty, fidelity. These have become outstanding Calvinistic virtues. As anyone can readily understand, this has led to the amassing of great wealth among Calvinists. The result has been, as modern economists have discovered, that Calvinism and capitalism in history have been closely linked together [54].

The same wholesome influence of the fundamental principle is discernible in the field of education. Science and art were gifts of God's common grace, and were to be used and developed as such. Nature was looked upon as God's handiwork, the embodiment of His ideas, in its pure form the reflection of His virtues. God was the unifying thought of all science, since all was the unfolding of His plan. But along with such theoretical reasons there are very practical reasons why the Calvinist has always been intensely interested in education, and why grade schools for children as well as schools of higher learning sprang up side by side with Calvinistic churches, and why Calvinists were in so large measure the vanguard of the modern universal education movement. These practical reasons are closely associated with their religion. The Roman Catholics might conveniently do without the education of the masses. For them the clergy — in distinction from the laity — were the ones who were to decide upon matters of church government and of doctrine. Hence these interests did not require the training of the masses. For salvation, all that the layman needed was an implied faith in what the church believed. It was not necessary to be able to give an intelligent account of the tenets of his faith. At the service not the sermon but the sacrament was the important conveyor of the blessings of salvation, the sermon was less needed. And this sacrament again did not require intelligence, since it operated ex opere operato.

For the Calvinist matters were just reversed. The government of the church was placed in the hands of the elders, laymen, and these had to decide upon the matters of church polity and the weighty matters of doctrine. This required an educated laity. Furthermore, the layman himself had the grave duty, without the intermediation of a sacerdotal order, to work out his own salvation, and could not suffice with an implied faith in what the church believed. He must read his own Bible. He must judge upon the sermon. He must know his creed. And it was a highly intellectual creed at that. Even for the Lutheran, education of the masses was not as urgent as for the Calvinist. It is true, the Lutheran also placed every man before the personal responsibility to work out his own salvation. But the laity were in Lutheran circles excluded from the office of church government and hence also from the duty of deciding upon matters of doctrine. From these considerations it is evident why the Calvinist must be a staunch advocate of education. If on the one hand God was to be owned as Sovereign in the field of science, and if the Calvinist's very religious system required the education of the masses for its existence, it need not surprise us that the Calvinist pressed learning to the limit. Education is a question of to be or not to be for the Calvinist. [55]

Remarkable is the flexibility which this fundamental principle has given to Calvinism. The sovereignty of God as the mainspring of action, according to the testimony of history, has within itself the potentialities for an endless variation in the development of the system, according as the needs of different peoples may demand. Calvinism, as we trace its history amongst the races and countries to which it has come, reveals no mechanical uniformity. It has displayed a remarkable power of adaptation to the circumstances of those among whom it flourished. Not alone did it make headway amongst nations historically and racially quite diverse, but among each of these it has been moulded into a somewhat different form. Calvinism as it developed in Holland shows variations from the type in Scotland, and these again from the Calvinism of England. Calvinism in the new world manifested one type amongst the New Englanders, and quite another amongst the Scotch-Irish of the Central States.

The same truth appears from a study of the Calvinistic Confessions. There are a multitude of these confessions, over thirty in all. But while none will question the Calvinistic nature of these various confessional standards, nevertheless, what a difference between them! What a difference, for example, between the so-called parent standard, the Catechism of Geneva of 1537, and the Heidelberg Catechism, between the Belgic Confession and the Westminster

Standards, between the Calvinism of the Episcopal Church of England which has been recognized as a Reformed Church and that of the Presbyterians of the same country.

The case is quite the opposite with Lutheranism. There we find not multiformity, but a condition which approaches mechanical uniformity. Lutheranism has been almost exclusively confined to the Germanic race, to Germany and to colonizations of Germans elsewhere, and to the Danish and Scandinavian peoples who are akin to the Germans. And in these countries "strictly speaking, it has produced but a single church and a single confession." While Calvinism has entered many countries and founded many and multiform churches.

With all the rigidity of principle characteristic of Calvinism the system possesses a power of adaptation to various races and conditions which may truly be called great. The remark of Herman Bavinck is in point: "It does not demand for itself the same development in America and England which it has found in Holland. This only must be insisted upon, that in each country and in every Reformed Church it should develop itself in accordance with its own nature and should not permit itself to be supplanted or corrupted by foreign ideas. The tendency now prevailing in England and America of looking towards Germany as the centre of theological science can but work harm for both the Reformed Church and the Reformed theology. In this manner all sorts of heterogeneous principles and ideas find an entrance into the churches and schools, which thus are led to undermine their own foundations. As of every nation that honors its independence, so it is the calling of every Church to guard and preserve its individual character, and, instructed by the teachings of history, to labor for the Church and theology of the future." [56]

In conclusion let it be remembered that this fundamental principle of Calvinism, the sovereignty of God, may never be, and by true Calvinists never was, construed as a mere abstract dogma, but as a living, vital principle aglow with life. Calvinism always was something more than the mere intellectual adherence to dogmas which so many of its foes and would-be friends would have us believe. Not the sovereignty of God as a speculative thought, but the sovereignty of God as a conviction that controlled every nerve and fibre of his being, was the fundamental principle of the Calvinist and the mainspring of his action. As Mitchell Hunter succinctly summarizes it: "Where the sense of a divine providential government is deep and strong, where the eye of faith sees God sitting at the loom of time weaving with wise and loving thought, though it may be with inscrutable purpose, the web of individual lives, where piety waves aside all would-be intermediaries, seeking and finding immediate fellowship with a gracious Father-God, where the mystical in human nature is given proper recognition and due rights, restrained from extravagances by the firm rein of a cool common-sense, where men with a high gravity live life under a profound sense of responsibility and a keen realization of its incalculable issues in eternity, where a community, a society, a people bow to the imperious claims of a Christianized conscience and seek to order their affairs under its direction, there Calvinism lives." [57]

NOTES

NOTES

[1] Cf. **Benjamin B. Warfield**, article *Calvinism,* in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge,* 1908, Vol 2, p. 359. For an official expression of the beliefs of the Calvinists, the reader is referred to the Confessional Standards of the Calvinists, of which there are a considerable number, over thirty in all. Of these the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt, the Westminster Confession and Catechism, the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, and the Second Helvetic Confession, are the principal ones. Besides in these official documents, the Calvinistic view is reflected with greater or lesser precision in the writings of its leading exponents, of whom **John Calvin** is by common consent the greatest. On the Confessional Standards, consult **Philip Schaff**, *The Creeds of Christendom,* Fourth Edition, 1884, Vol. 1, Seventh Chapter, pp. 354–813.

[2] **Benjamin B. Warfield**, as cited, p. 359.

[3] Cf. **Abraham Kuyper**, Stone-Lectures on *Calvinism,* delivered at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, N. J., October, 1898, p. 7.

[4] Cf. F. KATTENBUSCH, *Protestantism,* article in *The New Schaff–Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge,* 1908, Vol. IX, pp. 290–291. For a detailed account of the total membership of each denomination, as compiled by H. K. CARROLL, consult BENJAMIN S. WINCHESTER, *The Handbook of the Churches,* published for the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, by J. E. STOHLMANN, 129 Park Row, New York City.

[5] Cf. F. KATTENBUSCH, article *Protestantism,* as cited, p. 291.

[6] MASON W. PRESSLY, *Calvinism and Science,* article in *Ev. Rep.,* 1891, p. 662 f.

[7] Cf. A. MITCHELL HUNTER, *The Teaching of Calvin. A Modern Interpretation,* Glasgow, 1920, pp. 4, 5, 45.

[8] Cf. HERMANN BAUKE, *Die Probleme der Theologie Calvins,* 1922, p. 1 ff. Consult also BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD, article *Calvinism* in *The New Schaff–Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge,* Vol. III, p. 359 f. For a survey of the literature on this question consult H. VOIGT, *Fundamental dogmatik,* 1874; W. HASTIE, *The Theology of the Reformed Church in its Fundamental Principles,* 1904; HERMANN BAUKE, *Die Probleme der Theologie Calvins,* 1922.

[9] HERMANN BAUKE, as cited, pp. 7–11.

[10] BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD, as cited, p. 360.

[11] W. HASTIE, as cited, p. 134. Recent advocates of this view are notably A. RITSCHL, F. LOOFS, and in a measure ERNST TROELTSCH. For a discussion of this question consult the instructive article of EMILE DOUMERGUE, *Calvin, Epigone or Creator*, article in *Cal vin and the Reformation*, by E. DOUMERGUE and OTHERS. Publ. by Fleming H. Revell Co., N. Y., 1909, p. 1 ff. Consult also H. BAUKE, as cited, pp. 100–108.

[12] W. HASTIE, as cited, p. 134.

[13] H. BAUKE, as cited, pp. 29–35.

[14] Cf. EMILE DOUMERGUE, *What Ought to be Known About Calvin*, in *Evangelical Quarterly Review*, Vol. 1, 1929, p. 68.

[15] B. WIELENGA, *Referaat gehouden op den Bondsdag van Gereformeerde Mannen-vereenigingen te Amsterdam*, June 27, 1929, reviewed in the *Rotterdammer* of Thursday, June 27, 1929. He defended a number of theses regarding Calvinism, of which thesis No. IV reads: "In zijn wereld- en levensbeschouwing zoekt het Calvinisme de handhaving van het evenwicht tusschen de saamhoorige tegendeelen: Verborgenheid en openbaring, transcendentie en immanentie, verstandelijkheid en mystiek, geest en stof, het hemelsche en het aardsche, afhankelijkheid en verantwoordelijkheid, wereldvlucht en cultuur." Thesis No. V reads: "In het vasthouden aan deze contrapolaire verhoudingen lag de waarborg van den vooruitgang en van de vruchtbaarheid van het Calvinisme op elk levensgebied, ook op het terrein der cultuur."

[16] W. Hastie, as cited, p. 23.

[17] W. Hastie, as cited, p. 24.

[18] Cf. Reinhold Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Band IV, 2 Hälfte, pp. 558, 559.

[19] W. Hastie, as cited, p. 142.

[20] H. Bauke, as cited, p. 58, "Dass wir in diesen (*i.e.* the doctrine of God) ein wichtigstes Grundelement vor uns haben, darüber sind sich denn auch alle Forscher einig."

[21] Karl Holl, *Johannes Calvin,* 1909, p. 8, "Die Bedeutung von Calvin's theologischer Arbeit beruht auf der Energie mit der er sie (d.h. die Gottesidee) in den Mittelpunkt geschoben hat. Jedes einzel-problem mündet bei Calvin im Gottesbegriff."

[22] W. Dilthey, *Die Glaubenslehre der Reformatoren,* in *Preuss. Jahrb.*, 1894, p. 80, cited by H. Bauke, *op. cit.*, p. 25, "Der geniale konstructive Ausdruk der Calvinischen Religiostät ist, dass die Lehre vom Menschen keinen Hauptteil der institutio bildet, sondern, da Gottes Wirken den ganzen Gegenstand der religiösen Anschauung bildet, in allen Teilen von dem dominierenden systematische Entwicklung des ganzen religiösen Stoffes aus dem Wirken Gottes auf den Menschen, nach dem in seinen Ratschluss enhaltenen Zusammenhang seiner Functionen, ist der einzige echte architektonische Gedanke, welcher aus dem unermesslichen Bücherhaufen protestantischer Dogmatik bis

auf Calixt, wie er den Boden von einundeinhalb Jahrhunderten bedeckt, dem kritischen Forscher entgegentritt."

[23] N. W. E. RAUENHOFF, *Geschiedenis van het Protestantisme*, Vol. 1, pp. 115, 116, cited by A. EEKHOF, Note, p. 38, "Laat men nu het beginsel der gereformeerden beschrijven als: 'das Princip alleiniger Abhängigkeit slechthin von Gott,' of als 'die idee der absoluten Causalität Gottes,' of als 'de belijdenis van Gods volstrekte opperheerschappij in de natuurlijke en zedelijke wereld,' het resultaat voor de onderscheidene richting van het gereformeerde stelsel blijft toch in hoofdzaak hetzelfde. Het is altijd, dat de gereformeerden van het objectieve, van God in hunne beschouwing uitgaan, en dienovereenkomstig hunne leer inrichten."

[24] Cf. A. EEKHOF, as cited, p. 17.

[25] Cf. JOHN CALVIN, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Translated from the original Latin and collated with the author's last edition in French, by JOHN ALLEN. Publ. by the Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath School Work, 1921, Vol. 1, Chap. 1, p. 46.

[26] B. B. WARFIELD, *Calvin as a Theologian and Calvinism Today*, Presbyterian Board of Publication, Philadelphia, 1909, pp. 23, 24.

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 21.

[28] W. HASTIE, as cited, p. 143.

[29] Cf. H. BAUKE, as cited, pp. 23, 24.

[30] In his *Systematic Theology* (1872), Vol. I, p. 548.

[31] D. P. D. Fabius, *Het Wezen van het Calvinisme,* Kampen, 1919, pp. 20, 21.

[32] H. Bauke, *Die Probleme der Theologie Calvins* (1922), p. 82: "Die Prädestinationslehre, wie von A. Ritschl an alle lutherischen und reformierten Forscher übereinstimmend sagen, mit alleiniger Ausnahme veilleicht von Bohatec, (ist) nicht die Zentrallehre Calvins."

[33] J. Bohatec, *Calvins Vorsehungslehre,* printed in *Calvinstudien,* pp. 415–427.

[34] Cf. D. P. D. Fabius, as cited, pp. 20, 21.

[35] Cf. A. Mitchell Hunter, *The Teaching of Calvin. A Modern Interpretation.* Glasgow: Maclehose, Jackson and Co., 1920, pp. 89, 90. Consult also Herbert D. Foster, *Liberal Calvinism,* printed in his *Collected Papers* (1929), pp. 109–112; cf. also E. Doumergue, *What We Ought to Know About Calvin,* in *The Evangelical Quarterly Review,* Vol. 1, No. 1, 1929, pp. 68–72.

[36] Cf. A. Mitchell Hunter, as cited, pp. 92, 93; H. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (1911), Vol. II, pp. 393, 397.

[37] This is notably true of the ultra-supralapsarians. But read the illuminating remarks of H. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (1911), Vol. II, pp. 404–410.

[38] E. DOUMERGUE, *Jean Calvin,* Vol. IV, p. 357, quoted by H. BAUKE, as cited, p. 84. Cf. also W. HASTIE, as cited, p. 261.

[39] B. B. WARFIELD, *Calvin as a Theologian and Calvinism Today,* pp. 22, 23, and Article *Calvinism,* by the same author, printed in the *New Schaff–Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge,* Vol. II, p. 359.

[40] CHARLES HODGE, *Systematic Theology* (1872), Vol. I, p. 440.

[41] Cf. W. HASTIE, as cited, p. 159.

[42] A. MITCHELL HUNTER, as cited. p. 47. Cf. also W. HASTIE, as cited, p. 159, and E. TROELTSCH, *Soziallehren der Christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen* (1923), in the author's *Gesammelte Schriften,* pp. 615, 616.

[43] H. BAVINCK, *The Future of Calvinism,* printed in *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review,* No. 17, January, 1894, pp. 3, 4.

[44] *Ibid.,* p. 4.

[45] *Ibid.,* p. 5.

[46] A. MITCHELL HUNTER, as cited, pp. 41–44. Cf. also H. BAUKE, as cited, pp. 35–39.

[47] H. BAUKE, as cited, p. 38: "Die einzelnen Elemente der Calvinischen Dogmatik sind übernommenes, religiöses Gut, Calvin selbst ist kein speculativer Philosoph, auch kein speculativer Dogmatiker, er hat mit Fichte und Hegel, aber auch mit Biedermann oder Lipsius nichts gemein."

[48] ERNST TROELTSCH, as cited, in note to p. 617.

[49] Cf. J. BOHATEC, as cited, pp. 363, 402, note 1; A. MITCHELL HUNTER, pp. 49, 52; E. TROELTSCH, p. 617. See also R. SEEBERG, *Dogmengeschichte*, II, p. 397, IV–2, p. 575 Note; M. SCHEIBE, *Calvins Praedestinationslehre* (1897), p. 114.

[50] CASPAR WISTAR HODGE, *The Reformed Faith*, in *The Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1929, pp. 14, 15.

[51] A. MITCHELL HUNTER, as cited, p. 293. For a survey of the fundamental principles of Calvinistic Ethics, consult P. LOBSTEIN: *Die Ethik Calvins in ihren Grundzügen entworfen*, 1877.

[52] Consult A. KUYPER, *Antirevolutionaire Staatkunde*, Vol. 1 (De Beginselen), Kampen, 1916, for a survey of the Political Principles of Calvinism. Cf. also ERNST TROELTSCH, as cited, Vol. I, pp. 681–703, and HERBERT D. FOSTER, *The Political Theories of Calvinists Before the Puritan Exodus to America*, in *American Historical Review*, April, 1916, reprinted in *Collected Papers* of Herbert D. Foster, 1929, pp. 77–105; also GISBERT BEYERHAUS, *Studien zur Staatsanschauung Calvins mit besonderer Berücksichtigung seines Souveranitatsbegriffs*, Berlin, 1910.

[53] ERNST TROELTSCH in his monumental work, *Die Sociallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*, 1923, pp. 607–794, a book with copious references and citations, has focussed attention upon the great sociological importance of Calvinism. For a brief

survey of some of the more important achievements of Calvinism in this field, consult EMIL KNODT, *Die Bedeutung Calvins und des Calvinismus für die protestantische Welt,* 1910.

For a refutation of some of the positions assumed by Troeltsch, cf. EMILE DOUMERGUE, *Calvin: Epigone or Creator?* in *Calvin and the Reformation,* 1909, p. 9 ff., and EMIL KNODT, as cited, p. 18 ff.

[54] It was especially the work of MAX WEBER, *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus,* published in *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik,* Tübingen, 1905, that in recent years first drew attention to the high significance of Calvinism for the economic world of today. A review of this work appeared in the *Harvard Theological Review* of July, 1928, p. 163 ff., by KEMPER FULLERTON. A searching criticism of Max Weber's book, and a partial refutation has been given by FELIX RACHFAHL, *Calvinismus und Kapitalismus* in the *Internationale Wochenschrift für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Technik von Hinneberg,* 3 Jahrg., Nr. 39–43, 1909, of which a review appears in the work of EMIL KNODT cited above.

[55] Cf. A. KUYPER, *Calvinism and Science,* Lecture IV of *Stone-Lectures* on *Calvinism,* delivered at Princeton Seminary, Princeton, N. J., 1898. Of these now famous lectures on *Calvinism* by Holland's great modern Calvinistic leader, EMIL KNODT remarks: "Wenn der Verfasser in seiner grossen Begeisterung für den Calvinismus sich gewiss zuweilen zu einer allzu kühnen Behauptung hinreiszen lässt, bei der man sofort

sieht, dass die Geschichte seines Herzens die Geschichte seines Gedankens ist, so bietet die ganze Darstellung doch eine Fülle van grossen Gesichtspunkten, einen solchen Reichtum van Tatsachen und eine so geistvolle und grosszügige Darbietung, dass man gerne wieder zum Lesen dieses Buches zurückkehrt." Cf. EMIL KNODT, as cited, p. 18. Cf. also GEORGE H. DENNY, *Calvin's Influence on Educational Progess* in *Calvin Memorial Addresses,* delivered before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, at Savannah, Georgia, May, 1909, pp. 147–174.

[56] H. BAVINCK, *The Future of Calvinism,* in *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review,* No. 17, January, 1894, pp. 21–24.

[57] A. MITCHELL HUNTER, as cited, p. 297.

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